

D. THE SLOANE MS. 3328, C. 1700¹

This catechism is in the British Museum, bound in a large volume on the fly-leaf of which Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) has written, "Loose papers of mine concerning curiosities". It constitutes part of the collection formed by Sir Hans Sloane, which was acquired by the British Museum in 1754. It is written on three and a half sides, about $7\frac{1}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$, of a double sheet of foolscap paper, which constitute fos. 142, 142^v, 143 and 143^v of the volume. Dr. Schofield of the MSS. Department of the British Museum, who examined the MS. in 1937, gives the date as *circa* 1700. The fact that the signs and words in the MS. are associated with operative *freemasons*, strongly suggests an immediate English source for the document, the word 'freemason' being unknown in Scotland as a trade designation. The reference to 'interprintices' and 'fellow crafter', on the other hand, points to an ultimate Scottish origin; the word 'attenders', and the expression 'this is bose or hollow' also support a Scottish origin. The catechism was printed in 1872 by Woodford as a pamphlet; the examination from the document had been printed in 1869 in an Appendix to Findel's *History of Freemasonry*. The transcript we print is made from a photostat of the document. See Introduction, pp. 8, 21 above.

Treatment of the Text. We print the numerous superior characters or superscript letters (as 'th' in wth) as in the original. Where we have expanded a contraction mark, we print the interpolated letters in italics (as *er* in *persons*).

A NARRATIVE OF THE FREEMASONS WORD AND SIGNES.

First they discover other by signes next they go in private to discourse, one signe is by giving their right hand a cast cross their brest from left to right with the tops of their ffingers about 3 or 4 inches below their Chin, anoth^{er} is by puling of their hat wth their right hand their two first ffingers aboue and the thumb and all the rest below the hats brim puling it of and giving it a cast from Left to right then on their head anoth^{er} is of drinking giving the glass a a cast cross und^{er} their chin from left to right : anoth^{er} is taking their handkerchief by the corner wth their right hand and throw it over their Left should^{er} letting it hang down their back and so walk a few steps along if any mason see it they will follow and take him by the hand; their gripe for fellow craftes is grasping their right hands in Each other thrusting their thumb naile close upon the Third joynt of each oth^{ers} first fffing^{er} their Masters gripe is grasping their right hands in each oth^{er} placing their four finger's nails hard upon the Carpus or end of others wrists and their thumb nailes thrust hard directly between the second Joynt of the thumb and the third Joynt of the first fffing^{er} but some say the mast^{ers} grip is the same I last discribed only each of their midle fffing^{ers} must reach an inch or three barly comes Length higher to touch upon a vein yⁱ comes from the heart.

Another signe is placing their right heell to the inside of their left in forme of a square so walk a few steps backward and forward and at every third step make a Little Stand placeing their feet Square as afores^d. this done any if masons perceive it they will presently come to you if you come where any masons tooles lyes lay y^m in forme of a square X² they will presently know y^t a free brother hath been there or a free broth^{er} coming where free massons are at worke if he takes some of their tooles and lay y^m in form of a Square X it is a signe to discover him, or if he takes one of their tooles or his own Staff and Strike saftly on the wall or worke saying this is bose or hollow if their be any free broth^{er} at the work he will answ^{er} it is solid w^{ch} words are signes to discov^{er} each oth^{er}. Anoth^{er} signe some use bending their right arme in form of a Square & laying the palm of their left hand upon their heart. Another is by twisting their eyes toward the east and twisting their mouth toward y^e west Anoth^{er} is bending their right knee holding up their hand towards the east and if it be night or dark they will give two Little haughts and a great one as if they were forceing a bone or a lump out of their throat, they will say ye day is for seeing the night for hereing, Anoth^{er} signe is by lending you a crooked pin or a bit of pap^{er} cut in the forme of a Square on receipt of w^{ch} you must come from w^t place or company soever you are in

¹ EMC, page 48.

² The portion X. X is written between the lines. The first X indicates the place where the insertion begins.

by virtue of your oath and by y^e aforementioned sign of y^e hat or hand you are to come if it were from the top of a Steeple to know their pleasure and to assist them And to lett you know he wants money he will hold a bitt of a pipe (or some such thing) to you saying can you change a Cole pence if you have money you say is [? = yes] if you have none say no, some will signifye their want of money by pulling their knife out of the sheath and giving it to a broth^{er} in company or alone if the broth^{er} haue money he takes the knife puting it in it's sheath and returne it, if he haue none he will return it bare as he received it ; which many of them do notwithstanding their oath and many oth^{er} signes they reject thô by oath they are bound to obey all ; Another signe is by taking their handkerchief in their right hand and blow their nose then holding it Straight out before them they give it two Little shakes and a big one Anoth^{er} signe is knocking at any door two little knocks and the third a big one They haue anoth^{er} signe used at the Table drinking when the glass goes not fast enough round they say Star the guile.

To Discourse a mason in France, Spaine, or Turkey (say they} the signe is to kneel Down on his left knee and. hold up his right hand to the sunn and the outlandish Broth^{er} will presently take him up but beleive me if they go on their knees on that acco^t they may remain there ; or any persons observe their signes as Long as y^e Jews will remaine on their beleife to receive their wished for Mesias from the East.

Here followeth there private discourse By way of Question and Answer.

(Questⁿ) are you a mason (Answ^{er}) yes I am a freemason (Q) how shall I know that (A) by perfect signes and tokens and the first poynts of my Ent^{er}ance (Q) which is the first signe or token skew me the first and I will shew you the second (A) the first is heal and Conceal or Conceal and keep secrett by no less paine than cutting my tongue from my throat (Q) where were you made a Mason (A) in a just and perfect or just and Lawfull Lodge (Q) what is a just and perfect or just and Lawfull Lodge (A) a just and perfect Lodge is two Interprintices two fellow craftes and two Mast^{ers} more or fewer the more the merrier the fewer the Bett^{er} Chear but if need require five will serve that is two Interprintices two fellow Craftes and one Mast^{er} on the highest hill or Lowest Valley of the world without the crow of a Cock or the bark of a Dogg. (Q) from whome do you derive your principalls (A) From a great^{er} than you (Q) who is that on earth that is great^{er} than a freemason (A) he y^t was caryed to y^e highest pinnicall of the Temple of Jerusalem (Q) whith^{er} is your Lodge shut or open (A) it is shut (Q) where Lyes the Keys of the Lodg[e] doore (A) they Ley in a bound Case or und^{er} a three cornerd pavem^t about a foot and halfe from the Lodge door (Q) w^t is the Keys of your Lodge Doore made of (A) it is not made of Wood Stone Iron or steel or any sort of mettle but the tongue of a good report behind a Broth^{ers} back as well as before his face (Q) how many Jewles belong to your Lodge (A) there are three the Square pavem^t the blazing Star and the Danty tassley (Q) how Long is the Cable rope of your Lodge (A) as Long as from the Lop of the Liver to the root of the tongue (Q) how many Lights are in your Lodge (A) three the sun the mast^{er} and the Square (Q) how high is your Lodge (A) without fouts yards or Inches it reaches to heaven (Q) how Stood your Lodge (A) east and west as all holly Temples Stand (Q) w^{ch} is the mast^{ers} place in the Lodge (A) the east place is the mast^{ers} place in the Lodge and the Jewell resteth on him first and he setteth men to works w^t the mast^{ers} have in the foornoon the wardens reap in the Afternoon.

In some places they discourse as followeth (Viz^t)

(Q) where was the word first given (A) at the Tower of Babylon (Q) where did they first call their Lodge (A) At the holy Chapell of S^t John (Q) how Stood your Lodge (A) as the said holy Chapell and all other holy Temples Stand (Viz^t) east and west (Q) how many lights are in your Lodge (A) two one to see to go in and another to see to work (Q) what were you sworne by (A) by god and the Square (Q) whither above the Cloathes or und^{er} the C[loathes] (A) under the Cloathes (Q) und^{er} what Arme (A) und^{er} the right Arme.

God is Gratfull to all Worshipfull Mast^{ers} and fellows in that Worshipfull Lodge from whence me [? = we] Last came and to you good fellow w^t is your name (A) J or B. then giving the grip of the hand he will say Broth^{er} John greet you well you (A) gods good greeting to you dear Broth^{er}.

Another salutation is giving the mast^{ers} or fellows grip saying the right Worshipfull the mast^{ers} and fellows in that Worshipfull Lodge from whence we Last came greet

you greet you greet you well, then he will repley Gods good greeting to you dear Brother.

Anoth^{er} they haue called the mast^{ers} word and is Mahabyn which is allways divided into two words and Standing close With their Breasts to each oth^{er} the inside of Each oth^{ers} right Ancle Joynts the mast^{ers} grip by their right hands and the top of their Left hand fingers thurst close on y^e small of each oth^{ers} Backbone and in that posture they Stand till they whisp^{er} in each oth^{ers} eares y^e one Maha- the oth^{er} repleys Byn.

THE OATH

The mason word and every thing therein contained you shall keep secrett you shall never put it in writing directly or Indirectly you shall keep all that we or your attend^{ers} shall bid you keep secret from Man Woman or Child Stock or Stone and never reveal it but to a brother or in a Lodge of Freemasons and truly observe the Charges in y^e Constitucion all this you promise and swere faithfully to keep and observe without any mann^{er} of Equivocation or mentall Resarvation directly or Indirectly so help you god and by the Contents of this book

So he kisses the book &c.

[Endorsed in bottom right-hand corner]

A Narrative of the Freemasons words & signs